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ABSTRACT

The public junior college was conceived with an "open door" to give the disadvantaged high school graduate another chance to break the poverty cycle and the minority student an opportunity to extend his/her skills and career options. Since its inception in the early 1900's, the mission of the junior college has changed. The initial focus on preparing students for transfer into a 4-year program of the 1920's altered when the introduction of the associate in arts degree signalled a new terminal education function. The birth of the "community college" in the 1960's brought forth a comprehensive mission, comprising terminal, transfer, and remedial programs. The firmly entrenched policy of open admissions has led to an influx of ill-prepared students lacking basic skills; a demand to design courses to meet the needs of part-time, re-entry, and older adult students; and, more recently, questions about the decline of academic standards and articulation with senior institutions. To maintain the community college's open door, it is important to remember that transfer is no longer the sole function of this institution, and that expanding access need not mean declining standards as long as community colleges perform diverse functions for diverse populations. (LL)

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JUNIOR COLLEGE ARTICULATION: ADMISSION, RETENTION, REMEDIATION, TRANSFER

A Position Paper
December 1982

by

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INTRODUCTION

Definition: Educational articulation describes the interface between two levels of programs, and the transition from one to the other.

The public junior college was conceived with an "open door"--the intention that open admissions would give the disadvantaged high-school graduate another chance to break the poverty cycle, and the minority student to extend his skills and realize wider career opportunities. As the number of applicants thus becoming eligible for post-secondary education increased, so did the problems of the two-year institutions. The open door was beginning to look like a "revolving door," when more and more of these students could not perform satisfactorily in any college program, and dropped out or were dismissed (Millett, 1981). A high-school diploma was no longer a guarantee of mastery of "basic skills," and the junior college was being forced to repeat much of the secondary program for too many of its entering students. According to Michael O'Keefe of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, one-quarter of high-school students drop out, only one-half of the graduates continue their education, and of those, over one-third require remediation in college. (Chronicle of Higher Education, November 3, 1982.) More public funds had to be allocated to "remediate secondary education deficiencies," causing the taxpayer to support the same students in the same programs twice: through public high school and then again through "developmental" courses in junior college. (Chronicle, Sep. 29, 1982.) With state appropriations tightening for many reasons,

and accountability formulae used to control funding, the junior colleges were hard-pressed to demonstrate success in preparing their clients for the world of work or for the academic world. Furthermore, the junior college was simultaneously burdened with new federally imposed roles for bilingual and handicapped education, and with new concerns for meeting the diverse vocational and cultural needs of the "nontraditional" adult and part-time learners of the local community. Rising to the surface was the frustration of state and institutional administrations alike at having to earmark so much money for remedial courses, especially in math and English, for ill prepared students. The state boards of education, responsible for funding, accrediting, licensing, and ensuring articulation between the two- and four-year public institutions, began to realize that not only admissions policies, but also retention standards, degree requirements, and transfer credits would need review.

I. HISTORICAL MISSION OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

In order to trace the development of the junior college in the United States, it is first necessary to point out that the term "junior college" has been used in the literature to describe widely differing types of institutions. About a century ago, there were two choices for the ambitious high-school graduate: he could continue his studies at a college or university, or he could go to a professional or technical or military school, depending upon his grades and his financial situation. But for those children of the wealthy who were

not "scholars," neither of these paths seemed appealing. For them, two new types of private academies sprang up. The first might be called "finishing schools" for the purpose of producing cultured, well rounded young men and women ready to assume their high places in a democratic society. The second type were frankly "college-preparatory schools," giving their select population extra, almost tutorial services to ensure future success in the regular programs (Fields, 1962). The many "junior colleges" established between 1900 and 1920 were,for the most part,private institutions with one or the other of these two missions.

By 1916, there were only nineteen public junior colleges, and these are lumped together with the private colleges in most of the literature concerning that period.

> The junior college, proposed and initiated both as an extension of secondary education and as an amputation from the university...grew until in 1921 there were... 70 public and 137 private institutions.
>
> (Thornton, 1964)

In 1919, a doctoral dissertation explored the rationale for the junior college, and concluded that there were a number of benefits for both the university and the small four-year college. First, the freshman and sophomore class size would be cut down if many students took their first two years at a junior college. This would allow the four-year institutions to improve instructor/student ratios, as well as help in allocation of facilities and resources. Secondly, the junior college could serve as both an extension of the secondary program and an introduction to higher education, making the transition between the two smoother. (McDowell, 1919 dissertation, cited by Thornton.)

The transfer function described above prevailed until about 1920, with the two years of junior college study considered perfectly applicable to the Bachelor's degree to be completed at the university. However, as the public junior colleges proliferated, a different mission was set forth:

> ...to attract and hold, for an additional two years of general culture and training, those students who would not go beyond high school (and to offer them) technical and other special preparation for life work. (Fields, 1962)

In fact, California had originally classified its public junior colleges as secondary schools so that they could be funded on the same basis as the high schools. Recognizing that many of their students would not transfer into a four-year program, the University of California began to award an Associate in Arts degree. By 1921, there were 70 publicly supported junior colleges, and the American Association of Junior Colleges was founded. Soon the terminal mission came to the fore. In 1928, the California State Department of Education issued a policy paper titled "The Need for Terminal Courses in the Junior College," and the following year, Los Angeles Junior College (now City College) agreed that "both cultural and utilitarian" terminal semi-professional courses were needed as much as transfer courses. (Thornton, 1964.)

One of the most extensive studies of the junior college movement was done in 1921 (Koos), which listed 25 popular purposes. In 1930, Campbell looked at course catalogues and found 58.7% preparatory, 15.5% occupational, 13.6% "democratizing," and 11.8% "popularizing higher education." (Both Koos and Campbell cited by Fields, 1962.)

The first publicly supported junior college still in existence was founded at Joliet, Illinois, in 1901. Whether the program was "terminal," like the certification of teachers in two-year normal schools, or "transfer," as in offering the required freshman and sophomore courses toward the baccalaureate degree in two-year junior colleges, the mission was (and is) "to serve those students not served anywhere else." Fields comments that in the United States, the role of the public junior college was to:

> ...provide terminal programs useful to the high-school graduate who would not pursue college work to the baccalaureate degree. But early in the short time the community college has been part of the educational scene, the role of the two-year college as a junior college preparing students for transfer to senior colleges was recognized.

The confusion as to whether and when the terminal or transfer function prevailed is due to the anachronistic use of the term "community college." Just as a distinction must be made between public and private junior colleges, so must the terms "junior" and "community" college be used correctly and not interchangeably.

II. THE OPEN-DOOR POLICY

As Campbell found, many junior college courses were designed to "democratize and popularize" higher education, to make it available to those who hitherto were barred from it. The concept of open admissions is based upon the ideal of universal access, the goal at the end of the path from elite to mass education, as described by Martin Trow. In the past, high-school students who were not considered "college material" were steered away from

"academic" studies and tracked into vocational or general programs. The stigma was largely erased when the Great Depression pointed up the need for vocational training and retraining, and later as World War II and the Cold War created a demand for technicians and engineers. The complexities of life in the Age of Technology made it clear that a uniform education for all was neither possible nor desirable. The "baby boom" made us a nation of voracious education consumers as the numbers of children of school age increased dramatically. When these children grew up, we had a large population in the 18-22 age range, the traditional college-age cohort. All were clamoring for educational services and competing for places in the classrooms so that they could compete in the job market later. But even before the period of rapid expansion which was at its height in the 60's, the Truman Commission on Higher Education (1947) urged:

> The time has come to make education through the 14th grade available in the same way that high school is now available. (cited by Palinchak, 1973)

In a further evolution, Frederick Kintzer (1976) described the trends that have changed the junior college into the community college of today.

To bring this trend into perspective, the Chronicle of Higher Education carried an article headlined, "Labour Party Calls Oxford and Cambridge 'Major Cancers'; Backs Open Admissions." (Sep. 15, 1982.) The British Labour Party made a commitment to open admissions at all universities:

> We are asserting a general right to education, as universal in its provision as the right to proper housing, or to security in old age. [Even the elite universities must comply by] instituting special programs for students without formal academic qualifications.
>
> (Emphasis mine)

This might appear to be where American higher education was in the 60's, our period of greatest educational expansion. The difference is that in this country, the high school graduate was being offered only some form of post-secondary education. If the Labour Party's recommendation is accepted, the British counterpart will get carte blanche: "Regardless of performance by applicants on an advanced-level examination," they must be admitted to any college or university of their choice.

Open admissions at our two-year institutions do not guarantee matriculation for a degree. The diversity of courses, including short-term or workshop type, assumes that the student can find suitable offerings and meet the qualifications for them. The courses are also designed to meet the needs of the nontraditional student: the part-timer, the "refresher-course" adult, or the senior citizen.

Havighurst and Rogers (1952) found that "20% of the ablest quarter of youth are prevented from attending college because of financial considerations." (Cited by Palinchak, 1973) The less able would presumably be screened out as freshmen or sophomores, and never apply to the four-year colleges and universities. The point is that even the marginal students would at least have a chance.

III. FROM JUNIOR TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES

By the early 1960's, the public junior colleges had, for the most part, shouldered their responsibility for providing multi-purpose services along with their specialized "terminal" and college-preparatory or "transfer" programs. Some major recommendations for the junior college were that "educational programs in less than four years should be located in the home communities of students," and "A fully organized junior college aims to meet the needs of a community." (Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 1956, cited by Thornton.) Because of demographic changes, more of their clients were "nontraditional students": adults attending part-time, senior citizens, handicapped veterans, unemployed career-changers, and housewives entering the workforce. Later, CETA trainees and Vietnamese refugees would require still other curriculum modifications. Federal regulations from above and local needs from below pressured these schools to accept new responsibilities. It is literally a misnomer to call them "junior colleges" when they have assumed the additional functions of a "community college." Many have changed their names to reflect their expanded missions. (Getty, 1960, cited by Fields).

Some of the trends that have transformed the junior college into the community college are described by Frederick Kintzer ('76):

* increasing demand for higher education; range of community needs
* equality of educational opportunity
* need for qualified manpower in all work classifications
* innovative practices not attempted by universities
* decentralization and regionalization of higher education.

The American Association of Junior Colleges has added to its title, and now calls its publication, THE COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGE JOURNAL. In its 1981 keynote article, "New Missions--New Goals," the AACJC reports the following priorities:

1. Leadership: public information
2. Advocate: cooperation with state councils and local agencies
3. Services: cooperation with federal government, foundations, corporations, media
4. Lifelong Learning: for adults and senior citizens
5. Educational Innovation and Issues: keeping up with research
6. Access to Postsecondary Education: commitment to open admissions
7. Professional Development Workshops: for college administrators and teachers

Its ongoing projects indicate the range of AACJC activities:

* Older Persons in Small Business
* Small Business Training Network
* Building Better Boards (with National Agency for Volunteerism
* Energy Communications Center
* Occupational Education
* Strengthening Humanities (with National Endowment for the Huanities)

We can see how far afield the two-year institutions have come since the University of Chicago first split off some of its "lower-level" courses for a separate "junior college."

IV. REMEDIATION

Open admissions and expanding access spell declining standards to many observers. Ill prepared students require remedial courses, which drain institutional resources. The dilemma is revealed in these quotes, taken from actual teacher complaints:

> 'We get graduates from high school who can't read and write...The public is paying twice for their secondary education...They're not only financially and socially disadvantaged--they're academically disadvantaged...How can we call this post-secondary education, when we have to teach them basic English grammar and simple math computations?'
>
> (Emphasis theirs; Chronicle Sep.29, 1982)

This on top of the plight of administrators, whose resources already are diminished by tight fiscal policies, seems to call for tightening admission requirements. But some wonder if these students, cheated once out of a decent education, must continue to fail. "Poorly prepared students may never attain a degree, but they deserve a chance to learn." (Chronicle, 9/29/82)

In 1965, over 60% of community college students stood at or below the 30th percentile on the SCAT (Moore, 1971). They are "high-risk" students: academically unprepared for higher education. Because many of the teachers have expectations about traditional "college material," they often do not understand the needs of these "unconventional" students. Florence Brawer (1971) asks:

> Is community college a cruel hoax?..Many community colleges continue to operate as unofficial extensions of the university and literally guarantee failure...

But Moore takes the opposite side:

> Millions of dollars have gone into programs to teach low-level skills that were obsolete the day the students enrolled.

He claims that money is wasted on remediation built on some sort of "standard" that is no longer valid in light of the knowledge explosion.

Is it too late for remediation? Perhaps, as some authorities suggest, the only way to avoid the problem is to issue a

"universal high school diploma" to guarantee a minimum level of competency in the basic skills. ("Demand Grows for Reforming High Schools," Chronicle, Nov. 3, 1982.)

In a symposium sponsored by the Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools, Montgomery Community College, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, some suggestions for collaboration and a formal interface between the high schools and community colleges were advanced:

* Make college entrance requirements clearer to the high schools, so that they may better prepare students.
* Exchange syllabi, textbooks, teacher workshops, resources.
* Exchange classes, or institute a "visiting professor" program.
* Make college events available to high school students.
* Share facilities, materials, libraries.
* Have joint county-wide programs in the performing and the fine arts.
* Train counselors jointly, especially in career programs.

The Kentucky State Board of Higher Education incorporated some articulation strategies both upward and downward into its Master Plan. This seems like a valid course of action, considering that education is (or should be) a continuum. Placing the blame for failure is not only unrealistic, but unproductive as well.

V. RETENTION AND TRANSFER

The Chronicle of Higher Education (Sep. 29, 1982) reported:

> State agencies that oversee community colleges are requiring students to take tests in basic skills and are imposing stricter criteria for associate-degree programs.

For example, faculty at two- and four-year colleges in Florida, at the request of the Florida State Commission on Higher Education, jointly developed a test to measure communication,

computation, and reasoning skills. If they fail, students are not granted their associate degrees, nor are they permitted to transfer to the four-year colleges. This is far from "closing the open door," as the headline proclaimed. The college that accepts transfer students has a right to expect the same quality of scholarship as they apply to their "native" freshman and sophomore classes. The courses must also be equivalent in content and level; otherwise, they will not be applicable toward the bachelor's degree, nor will the grades be meaningful or comparable.

One alternative is to dismiss those who fall below a predetermined G.P.A. Just as the instructor has the right to grade her students according to her own achievement standards, so also does the institution have the right to establish retention and dismissal policies. If the two-year college continues to pass on unprepared students, it will soon diminish its own reputation. The cycle must be broken.

A ray of hope shines when we remember that transfer is no longer (if ever it was) the sole purpose of the junior college which has become a community college. There is such a wide array of courses and programs that:

> ...the failing student should be assisted to discover a course in which his talents and interests qualify him to succeed. If his talents and interests are so limited that this is impossible...the student might as well leave...The situation is the same in the university or the junior college--the difference is that the community/junior college will probably have a course to suit him.
>
> (Thornton, 1966)

Florence Brawer (1971) demands that the community college give up its "sheepskin psychosis," and stop judging its success by the number of its transfer students. The career and vocational goals must be considered at least as important as the "Standard-transfer-college-parallel," and the unconventional needs of the nontraditional students must be recognized as a legitimate part of the community college mission.

As for the disappointment of those students who are dismissed or switched to a non-degree track, the buck stops here. What Burton Clark (1960) described as the "cooling-out" function in the junior college often works to make a mediocre scholar into a first-rate artist or competent craftsman. A "marginal" student in English literature or languages may shine in a technology program.

VI. CLOSING THE OPEN DOOR?

If we agree,with Florence Brawer and with Michael O'Keefe of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, that the two-year college must be on a continuum with elementary and secondary schools, as well as with four-year colleges and universities, then there is no reason to close the open door. The Kentucky State Master Plan (1981) recognized the need for articulation among all levels to utilize faculty, facilities, and resources in a period of tight funding and retrenchment. The junior college concept has been around for about a hundred

years, but its uniquely American adaptation, the community college, is only a little over twenty years old. Expanding access need not mean declining standards, so long as the institutions perform diverse functions for different populations. If a student is denied admission to one college, it must be that she can be better served elsewhere.

Our society, which needs well trained auto mechanics as much as it needs philosophers and researchers, will be the beneficiary. The most obvious gain is in terms of cost-effectiveness: duplication and overlapping of programs are minimized and the dwindling educational resources are utilized to greater advantage and with more efficiency. In a state educational system comprising the whole range from pre-kindergarten or Head Start to state universities, and in a time of limited finances, this type of planning deserves top priority.

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